



# Gauley River NRA News

## Dear Park Neighbors, Visitors, and Other Interested Parties:

In September we told you about plans to complete a Development Concept Plan for the Gauley River National Recreation Area. At our first public meeting, held on September 23, 2003 at the Midland Trail High School, we described the process that we are using to complete the DCP, invited you to share your concerns and ideas, and answered your questions.

Since our meeting, the DCP Planning Team has been busy gathering and analyzing data, preparing maps, talking with stakeholders, and pulling together the many ideas you have regarding the facilities needed at the Gauley River National Recreation Area. We have begun developing preliminary alternatives for the Park's river accesses, river rest stops, camping facilities, and trails.

On December 11, 2003 we will hold the second of four public meetings for the DCP. At that time we will give our neighbors, park users, and other interested parties an opportunity to hear what we have been doing, to ask additional questions, and to communicate concerns. The Keslers Cross Lanes Volunteer Fire Department has graciously offered its Fire Hall for our meeting place. It will be held from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. We hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Calvin F. Hite, Superintendent  
Gauley River National Recreation Area  
Bluestone National Scenic River  
New River Gorge National River



## Gauley River National Recreation Area Neighbor Questions and Answers

**Why was the Gauley River National Recreation Area created by Congress?** The Gauley River National Recreation Area was created by Congress on October 26, 1988 to protect and preserve the scenic, recreational, geological and fish and wildlife resources of the Gauley River and its tributary, the Meadow River.

**What land is the National Park Service authorized to acquire?** The National Park Service may acquire lands within the authorized boundary of the park. In addition, the National Park Service may, with the consent of the owner, acquire lands outside of the boundary but within one mile of the recreation area, for parking and related facilities.

**Can the National Park Service take my land?** As a federal land management agency, the National Park Service has the authority to exercise eminent domain. However, the National Park Service has only acquired land on the Gauley from willing sellers, and intends to continue this practice. In other words, the National Park Service does not plan to buy private land unless the property owner decides to sell.

### How much land within the one-mile limit is the National Park Service planning to acquire?

The National Park Service may suggest acquisition of a few properties outside of the boundary (but within one mile of it) for parking or other related facilities near river access points. The National Park Service can only acquire these properties with the landowner's consent.

**What process does the National Park Service use to acquire lands from willing sellers?** The National Park Service has a local real estate office in Oak Hill, West Virginia. Anyone interested in obtaining information regarding the acquisition process should contact the Allegheny Land Acquisition Field Office at 101 Kelly Avenue, P.O. Box 1146, Oak Hill, West Virginia, 25901-1146. The phone number is 304-465-5629 x16.

**What can the National Park Service do about park users who trespass on my property?** You should call 911. The 911 center will call the closest available law enforcement officer or an NPS ranger to help. You should know that in order for someone to be charged with trespassing, you must have posted or fenced your land in accordance with state regulations.

**Who should I call if there is an emergency within the park?** You should call 911. They will be sure that the right people are dispatched to the emergency. Local 911 centers are in radio contact with the NPS rangers on patrol.

**How can property owners learn more about the park and the National Park Service?** You can call the National Park Service at 304-465-0508, email us at [gari\\_dcp@nps.gov](mailto:gari_dcp@nps.gov), or stop by our offices at 104 Main Street in Glen Jean. We will be glad to answer your questions.

# Issues and Concerns Expressed by Park Neighbors, Users & Other Interested Parties (at Public Meeting 1)

## Landowners & Neighbors (Group 1)

### Major Conclusions Reported

- Should be more public access for locals versus private access
- Need better roads in the area
- There is too much traffic in the area, particularly during Gauley Season

### Other Comments

- **Emergency Services**
  - Underfunded and undermanned
  - NPS has too few people, too far away to help with serious rescues
  - Local emergency services need equipment, access and personnel
- **Traffic**
  - Traffic impacts in Kesler's Cross Lanes, particularly at the sharp curve, and on Panther Mountain Road
  - Traffic causes dust
  - Once private farms now more public
- **NPS Land Acquisition**
  - Concerned that NPS may condemn property
  - NPS' idea of fair market value not the same as local ideas
- **ATVs**
  - Are tearing up property and leaving trash
  - Some interest in using ATVs for hunting and fishing
  - If no ATV access, how can people access?
- **Trash**
  - Is a trash problem along roads
  - Timbering has made a mess and increased trash dumping
- **Special Permits for Locals**
  - Would like special permits to allow long-time residents of disabled people to get to places they have used traditionally
  - COE should also give special permits to local users to swim

## Climbing, Hiking, Biking

### Major Conclusions Reported

- Meadow climbing and access is okay as it exists
- Should only be hiking and biking on trails – no vehicles or horses
- Fewer trailheads would be better than many trailheads (Rt. 19 and Peters Creek viewed as likely points)
- Great potential for use of previous CSX right-of-way, as well as the river right rail line if and when it is abandoned
- How much improvement is too much improvement?

## Landowners & Neighbors (Group 2)

### Major Conclusions Reported

- NPS needs to coordinate with local emergency service providers so that they can better serve the public, including providing support for equipment and personnel
- Outfitters and kayakers speed on local roads, creating dust, noise, and hazardous conditions
- There is concern and misunderstanding in the community regarding NPS's ability to condemn private property and the manner in which NPS appraisals are prepared

### Other Comments

- **Traffic**
  - Too much traffic
  - Bus traffic one-way on narrow roads
  - Need shuttle system for cars to reduce traffic
  - Need better roads
  - Safety is a problem on narrow roads
  - Keep Shawver's Bridge Road open
  - Dust on Panther Mountain Road...upgrade road
- **Access**
  - Adding access is making things worse...should limit access
  - Need access for fishermen
  - Access for locals versus private access such as companies
  - 4-wheeler access needed
- **Miscellaneous Comments**
  - Leave the place alone
  - No more rafting companies
  - Bad atmosphere in places caused by rafting companies
  - NPS meeting not announced in Nicholas County paper
  - What is the buffer zone for?
  - Too much trash

## Four Wheeling

### Major Conclusions Reported

- ATVs are not permitted on lands acquired by NPS in the Gauley River National Recreation Area
- Are extensive opportunities in the region for ATV use on private land where riders have permission from private landowners

## Landowners & Neighbors (Group 3)

### Major Conclusions Reported

- Locals need support for local fire and emergency service providers who frequently are first responders to emergencies at the Park
- NPS should take care of what it already owns before acquiring more land
- Outfitters and kayakers create traffic safety problems on local roads – particularly on Route 129 in Keslers Cross Lanes
- The local community does not understand the one-mile setback line and is concerned that NPS will condemn their property and not pay fair market value

### Other Comments

- Are landowners to be relocated within the park and within the one-mile radius?
- Help for fire department?
- What would be wrong with transferring Carnifex Ferry to NPS?
- Past history of conflict with "rafters"
- Speeding - kayakers
- Poor driving
- User access – may be too much access
- Traditional uses need to be protected
- Security issues

## Watchable Wildlife, Birding, Sightseeing

### Major Conclusions Reported

- Should develop new activities in addition to boating
- Should provide access from Route 19 to the rail trail for hiking, hunting, fishing and climbing
- Should develop a bird watching trail along the Meadow River
- Should work with landowners adjacent to the park to protect wildlife habitats
- Saturday and Sunday Roads provide good access, but care should be taken to minimize impacts to residents living on those roads

### Other Comments

- Develop a birding guide program
- Protect priority bird habitat (Koontz Bend, Meadow River, Gauley River Left, Carnifex Ferry (old growth forest), Confluence at Gauley Bridge)
- NPS needs to partner with county regarding development on Saturday and Sunday Road (potential location for commercial/tourist development) (negative impacts on residential character)
- Develop a Vista Plan for visitors to view the river from overlooks

## Whitewater Paddling (Group 1)

### Major Conclusions Reported

- Should be access at Mason Branch, Woods Ferry, Bucklick, Swiss and Route 19
- There is a need to clarify property rights (who can use the riverbanks for access and lunch stops?)
- Should be more water releases than just Gauley Season

### Other Comments

- Need aesthetic, sanitary, free access in upper, middle and lower sections
- Need accesses on river right
- Need Woods Ferry access (bathrooms, roads, parking)
- Need summer releases (scheduled) (even just one day/month)
- Ownership/use of places on the river needs to be clarified (high/low water mark)
- Need designated lunch areas

## Hunting, Fishing

### Major Conclusions Reported

- Maintenance and security issues need to be addressed – more patrols, trash collection and security are needed
- Access points should be well maintained – with fewer accesses rather than more
- Abandoned CSX right-of-way should be used to provide limited access
- Comfort stations should be provided at some trail points

### Other Comments

- **Access**
  - Is limited public access for hunting
  - Need trails to get back in and have privacy
  - Need access at Mason Branch, Woods Ferry, Madison, Patterson Ferry, Gracie White, Maples Branch, Peters Creek, Bucklick, above Heaven Help You
  - Need access via Fisherman's Trail to spillway (past the cliff, go to river, good fishing spot)
  - Need access from Nicholas County side, particularly Upper Swiss
- **Miscellaneous Comments**
  - Not interested in campgrounds
  - Interested in plans for future use of the old railroad grade
  - No 4-wheelers (arrest them)
  - More patrol rangers (on 4-wheelers)
  - Take care of what NPS has already
  - Don't feel safe
  - Trash
  - Remember the locals

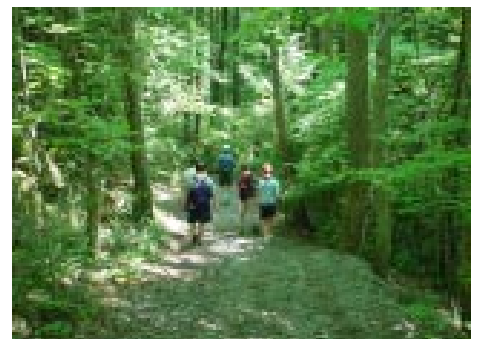
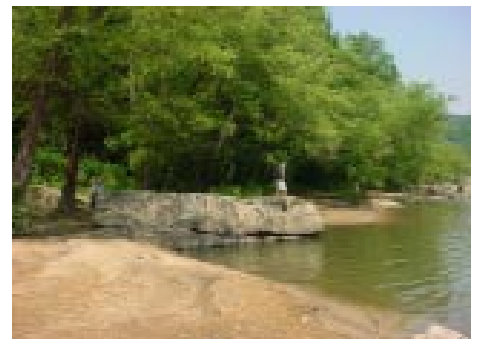
## Whitewater Paddling (Group 2)

### Major Conclusions Reported

- Need public access to the Middle Gauley and to the Meadow
- Need to minimize impacts of access points on the environment
- Accesses should provide for multiple uses (hiking, sightseeing, picnicking, boater access)

### Other Comments

- **Single most important concern – what to do?**
  - Change atmosphere of river? ...tasteful
  - Convenience of access
  - Difficulty of access
  - User diversity
  - Private ownership bringing in changes to the wilderness environment
  - Increase public ownership
  - Public access non-whitewater should be equal to private access
  - Better access to Meadow-Arrowhead Creek Road river left
  - Sweets Falls use by all
  - Promote education on how to access, how to treat area, etc.
  - Middle Gauley access between Upper and Lower Gauley – to have a 3-hour raft trip
  - Access below PSH – not Swiss
  - Guns at Dam?
  - Remedy conflicts between private and commercial
- **Middle Gauley access points – Mason Branch and Bucklick**
  - Closer access to Bucklick
  - Not set up to accommodate private vehicles
  - Use and develop Woods Ferry (road already publicly-owned)
  - Access below Route 19 bridge to Meadow (road already there on river left off Arrowwood Creek Road)
  - Woods Ferry public access would need shuttles in and out
  - Meadow under the bridge
- **Tailwaters Improvements**
  - Improve public use trails to view races
  - Bathroom
  - Handicapped access
  - Fish access
  - Electricity
  - Bathrooms on hilltop
  - Fix parking on hilltop
  - Better shuttle for private boaters
  - Use top for preliminary activities (park, change, bathroom) and then go down





National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Gauley River National Recreation Area  
P.O. Box 246  
Glen Jean, WV 25846

## Gauley River National Recreation Area Development Concept Plan PUBLIC MEETING 2

**Date:** Thursday, December 11, 2003  
**Time:** 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.  
**Place:** Keslers Cross Lanes Fire Hall  
**Location:** Route 129, 6.5 miles west of  
Route 19, Keslers Cross  
Lanes, WV

Mountain bikes on the rail-trail trestle  
over the Gauley River



**EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA**

### Who is on the Planning Team?

The DCP Planning Team consists of the Park Superintendent, Park Staff, and technical specialists from the National Park Service's Northeast Regional Office. Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC is a private contractor that is assisting the National Park Service with the planning process. The Park Superintendent and the Director of the Northeast Regional Office of the National Park Service will be the decision-makers in the planning effort. The DCP Planning Team will coordinate with appropriate State of West Virginia, federal and local agencies.

### Comments? Write or Email to:

Calvin Hite, Superintendent  
Email: [gari\\_dcp@nps.gov](mailto:gari_dcp@nps.gov)  
Gauley River National Recreation Area  
P.O. Box 246  
Glen Jean, WV 25846

**Park Headquarters:** (304) 465-0508

Fax: (304) 465-0591

Internet: <http://www.nps.gov/gari/gauleydc.htm>

### PUBLIC MEETING 2

The National Park Service will host the second Public Meeting for the Gauley River National Recreation Area Development Concept Plan:

**December 11, 2003  
7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.**

**At Keslers Cross Lanes Fire Hall**  
(Route 129, 6.5 miles west of Route 19,  
Keslers Cross Lanes, WV)

### Agenda:

- Opening Greeting
- Presentation – What We Heard from You at Public Meeting 1
- Information Stations:
  - Answers to Your Real Estate Questions
  - Neighborhood Concerns
  - Emergency Services
  - Tailwaters Facilities
  - Middle and Lower Gauley River Access
  - Meadow River Access
  - Trails
  - Camping

### Development Concept Plan Process and Schedule

1	Data Collection Public Scoping Identification of Issues Newsletter 1 Public Meeting 1	Summer 2003
2	<b>Development of Alternatives Newsletter 2 Public Meeting 2</b>	<b>Fall 2003</b>
3	Evaluation of Alternatives Newsletter 3 Public Meeting 3	Winter 2004
4	Identification of Preferred Alternative Draft DCP/EA Public Meeting 4	Spring 2004
5	Responses to Public Comments Final DCP/EA	Summer 2004